

## Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 259374

TOSEC 408

FOLLOWING REPEAT AMMAN 7047 SENT ACTION SECSTATE  
INFO ABU DHABI ALGIERS BEIRUT BONN CAIRO DAMASCUS  
JIDDA KHARTOUM KUWAIT LONDON MANAMA MOSCOW MUSCAT  
PARIS RABAT ROME SANAA TEL AVIV TRIPOLI TUNIS  
JERUSALEM GENEVA USUN NY DIA USCINCEUR, NOVEMBER  
24TH:

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 7047

KUWAIT PASS DOHA  
GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL  
BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PGOV, JO  
SUBJ: NEW JORDANIAN CABINET

1. SUMMARY: IN PURSUIT OF HIS PLEDGE TO MAKE DOMESTIC CHANGES  
FOLLOWING RABAT ARAB SUMMIT, KING HUSSEIN NOVEMBER 23 DISOLVED  
PARLIAMENT, APPOINTED NEW CABINET AND ACCEPTED RESIGNATIONS OF  
MAJOR PALACE FIGURES. IN MILD SURPRISE, ZAYD RIFAI CONTINUES IN  
LEADING CABINET ROLE AS PRIME MINISTER, FOREIGN MINISTER AND  
DEFENSE MINISTER, DESPITE EARLIER ATTEMPT BY KING TO FORM CARE-  
TAKER GOVERNMENT USING ELDERLY UNCLE SHARIF HUSSEIN AS FIGURE-  
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HEAD AND EMPLOYING MANY PREVIOUS PRIME MINISTERS. APPARENTLY

SHARIF HUSSEIN TOO ILL TO SERVE, OTHER EX-PRIME MINISTERS WERE "DIFFICULT" TO CONVINCE TO TAKE LESSER POSTS AS MINISTERS AND PUBLIC REACTION WAS SHARPLY NEGATIVE. IN FULLFILLMENT KING'S POLICY FOLLOWING RABAT CONFERENCE, CABINET REFLECTS INCREASED EMPHASIS ON EAST BANK JORDAN, ALTHOUGH FOUR PALESTINIAN-ORIGIN MINISTERS ARE STILL INCLUDED. ALSO CONTAINS THREE BEDOUINS AND REGIONAL REPRESENTATION WITHIN EAST BANK ITSELF. IN FINAL ANALYSIS, NEW CABINET - WITH RETENTION RIFAI AND SEVEN PREVIOUS MINISTERS INCLUDING SEVERAL TECHNOCRATS -- DOES NOT REPRESENT RADICAL CHANGE AND IS PROBABLY MINIMUM GESTURE REQUIRED TO REFLECT KING'S ADHERENCE TO RABAT. MAJOR PUBLIC REACTION THUS FAR HAS BEEN EAST BANKER APPROVAL OF HOUSECLEANING OF FIVE POWERFUL PALACE ADVISORS WHO WERE UNPOPULAR FOR CORRUPTION AND/OR GIVING BAD POLICY ADVICE TO KING ON PALESTINIAN/WEST BANK ISSUE. CONSERVATIVE EAST BANKER MUNTHAR BADRAN WILL NOW RE-FORM PALACE STAFF. THERE MAY ALSO BE SOME ADVERSE REACTION TO RETENTION OF PM RIFAI WHO HAS NOT BEEN POPULAR DOMESTICALLY, PARTICULARLY WITH THE ARMY AND WITH HARD LINE EAST BANKERS. HIS RETENTION MAY HOWEVER BE REASSURING TO PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY. END SUMMARY.

2. REAPPOINTMENT OF ZAYD RIFAI AS PRIME MINISTER, FOREIGN MINISTER AND DEFENSE MINISTER CAME AS MILD SURPRISE. ONLY ONE WEEK PREVIOUSLY IT WAS NEARLY CERTAIN THAT KING'S UNCLE, SHARIF HUSSEIN WOULD BE APPOINTED: KING HAS ALREADY SELECTED HIS CHOICES FOR ALL CABINET POSITIONS IN CARETAKER GOVERNMENT, COMPOSED PARTLY OF PRESTIGIOUS FORMER PRIME MINISTERS, THAT WAS TO OVERSEE REDRAFTING OF DOMESTIC LEGISLATION TO RE-ELECT JORDANIAN POLITICAL ABANDONMENT OF WEST BANK FOLLOWING RABAT CONFERENCE DECISION TO CEDE AUTHORITY ON WEST BANK ULTIMATELY TO PLO. EXACT REASONS FOR KING'S REVERSAL ARE AS YET UNCERTAIN. HOWEVER, THERE WAS WIDESPREAD CRITICISM OF APPOINTING AILING, INEFFECTUAL AND OLD-FASHIONED SEVENRY-YEAR-OLD SHARIF HUSSEIN PLUS FEAR SHARIF HUSSEIN COULD CONTROL NEITHER GOVERNMENT NOR POWERFUL AND INDEPENDENT FORMER PRIME MINISTERS IN CABINET. SOME FORMER PRIME MINISTERS, INCLUDING BAHJAT TALHOUNI, REPORTEDLY REFUSED TO SERVE IN LESSER POSTS AS MINISTERS. SINCE KING WAS ALSO DETERMINED IN ANY CASE TO RETAIN SERVICES OF ZAYD RIFAI IN INFLUENTIAL POSITION (AND RIFAI CLEARLY PREFERRED BEING PRIME MINISTER), PERHAPS KING REALIZED IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE TO MAINTAIN HIM DIRECTLY AS PM RATHER THAN RISKING CRITICISM OF APPOINTING RIFAI TO PALACE POSITION AS KING CONFIDENTIAL

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ORIGINALLY CONTEMPLATED. PM RIFAI TOLD AMBASSADOR NOV 24 THAT SHARIF HUSSEIN APPOINTMENT DREW SUFFICIENTLY SHARP ADVERSE REACTION TO INDUCE KING TO CHANGE HIS MIND.

3. ALTHOUGH ALL BUT FOUR CABINET MEMBERS ARE FROM EAST BANK (PREVIOUS CABINETS HAD ONE-HALF MEMBERSHIP OF PALESTINIAN ORIGIN) WE DO NOT SEE RADICAL CHANGES IN CABINET'S CHARACTER. WITH HIS USUAL FIRM BACKING BY KING HUSSEIN, PM RIFAI SHOULD CONTINUE DOM-

INANT CABINET ROLE. WITH EXCEPTION OF CLOSE ROYAL ADVISOR MININFO SALAH ABU ZAYD, FEW NEW ADDITIONS TO CABINET ARE SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL PERSONALITIES. CABINET APPEARS COMPOSED LARGELY OF MIXTURE OF EFFICIENT TECHNOCRATS (OFTEN ALSO PALESTINIANS) AND UNAMBITIOUS TRADITIONAL EAST BANK FIGURES INCLUDING THREE BEDOUIN TRIBAL LEADERS. ITS COMPOSITION ALSO REFLECTS APPARENT CONSCIOUS EFFORT AT REGIONAL BALANCE: THERE ARE FOUR MINISTERS FROM NORTH, SOUTH AND MIDDLE REGIONS OF EAST BANK AND FOUR FROM W. BANK.

4. FOLLOWING PALACE FIGURES ALSO RESIGNED NOVEMBER 23:

ABDUL MUNEIM RIFAI, COUNSELOR FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

BAHJAT TALHOUNI, CHIEF OF ROYAL DIWAN

BAHADIN TOUQAN, MINISTER OF COURT

AMER KHAMMASH, ROYAL POLITICAL ADVISOR

MUHAMMAD RASUL AL KILAANI, ROYAL SECURITY ADVISOR

WHOLESALE PALACE DEPARTURE MAY BE KING'S GESTURE IN RESPONSE TO CONTINUED RECENT PRESSURES FROM HARD LINE EAST BANKERS TO "CLEAN OUT UNPOPULAR PALACE CROWD" WHO WERE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR UNDUE INFLUENCE AND FOR PROMOTING POLICY OF CONTINUING JORDANIAN INVOLVEMENT IN WEST BANK. THE MAJOR PUBLIC REACTION THUS FAR HAS BEEN EAST BANKERS APPROVAL OF HOUSECLEANING OF FIVE POWERFUL PALACE ADVISORS WHO HAD INCREASINGLY BECOME OBJECT OF PUBLIC DISAPPROBATION. LONGTIME POLITICAL EMINENCE CHIEF OF DIWAN BAHJAT TALHOUNI AND QUEEN'S FATHER BAHADIN TOUQAN AND POL ADVISOR AMER KHAMMASH WIDELY SUSPECTED OF PERSONAL CORRUPTION. INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS ADVISOR ABDUL MUNEIM RIFAI (ZAYD RIFAI'S UNCLE) DISLIKED BY ARMY FOR CONCILIATORY POLICIES AS PM TOWARDS FEDAYEEN IN 1970. KILAANI WIDELY HATED FOR REPRESSIVE ROLE AGAINST PALESTINIANS AS FORMER HEAD OF GID.

5. ONLY PALACE APPOINTMENT THUS FAR IS MUDHAR BADRAN AS CHIEF OF DIWAN. A FORMER HEAD OF GENERAL INTELLIGENCE AND RESIGNING MIN-OF EDUCATION, BADRAN IS STAUNCHLY LOYAL AND CONSERVATIVE EAST CONFIDENTIAL

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BANKER WHO WOULD GIVE A DECIDEDLY MORE TRADITIONALIST EAST BANK CHARACTER TO PALACE STAFF.

6. WE EXPECT MAJOR REACTIONS TO NEW CABINET WILL BE CENTERED ON RETENTION OF PM RIFAI. DESPITE HIS FIGTS, RIFAI HAS NOT BEEN POPULAR. HE IS BELIEVED TO HAVE PROFITTED PERSONALLY FROM HIS OFFICE AND WAS CRITICIZED BY EAST BANKERS, INCLUDING ARMY ELEMENTS PRIVATELY, FOR NEGLECTING DOMESTIC AFFAIRS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DURING PREOCCUPATION WITH MIDEAST NEGOTIATING AND DEFENSE ISSUES. NEVERTHELESS, KING HUSSEIN CONTINUES TO RELY HEAVILY ON RIFAI AND IT WAS OBVIOUS RIFAI WOULD RETAIN INFLUENCE, WHATEVER HIS POSITION. WE SUSPECT RIFAI'S RETENTION WILL ALSO BE REASSURING TO PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY, WHICH IS SOMEWHAT JITTERY CONCERNING ITS STATUS FOLLOWING RABAT CONFERENCE, DESPITE KING'S ASSURANCES OF MODERATION IN MAKING DOMESTIC CHANGES INCLUDING

QUESTION OF PALESTINIAN-JORDANIAN CITIZENSHIP. RIFAI WE BELIEVE  
WILL ALSO WISH PROCEED SLOWLY IN EFFORT TO AVOID ANY DOMESTIC  
COMPLICATIONS ON PALESTINIAN ISSUE.

7. KING SET TONE OF NEW GOVERNMENT IN MESSAGE TO PM RIFAI NOV 24.  
WHILE INDICATING THAT GOJ REORGANIZATION DESIGNED TO GIVE MEANING  
TO RABAT CONFERENCE (WE ASSUME BY EMPHASIZING EAST BANK CHARACTER  
OF GOVERNMENT) KING STATED "THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PALESTINIAN  
ENTITY THROUGH THE PALESTINIAN NATIONAL AUTHORITY DID NOT MEAN  
ERADICATING THE PRINCIPLES OF BROTHERHOOD BETWEEN OUR TWO SISTERLY  
NATIONS" WE INTERPRET KING'S REMARKS AS INDICATING FUREHER  
EMPHASIS ON EAST BANK CONCERNS WHILE REASSURING LOCAL PALESTINIAN  
COMMUNITY THAT THEY WILL BE TREATED FAIRLY. KING'S STATEMENT  
ALSO REAFFIRMED HIS ACCEPTANCE OF RABAT SUMMIT RESOLUTIONS. IN  
IT HE AFFIRMED (A) "FULL SUPPORT TO PEOPLE OF PALESTINE AND FULL  
BACKING TO THEIR LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE (I.E. PLO) IN THEIR  
EFFORTS TO RESTORE LEGITIMATE RIGHTS"; (B) ABSOLUTE SUPPORT FOR  
ARAB STRUGGLE TO REGAIN OCCUPIED LANDS AND COOPERATION WITH  
CONFRONTATION STATES; AND (C) COOPERATION WITH ALL ARABS FOR JOINT  
ACTION IN ALL FIELDS.

8. THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE REORGANIZATION OF MINISTRIES--ONLY THE  
DISAPPEARANCE OF THE MIN FOR THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES NECESSIT-  
ATED BY MINIMUM JORDANIAN COMPLIANCE WITH RABAT SUMMIT DECISIONS.  
FORMER INCUMBENT, TAHER AL-MASRI, TOLD EMBASSY THAT WHILE  
HIS MINISTRY WOULD DISAPPEAR FROM THE CABINET, IT WAS BEING RET-  
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URNED TO STATUS OF MAJOR DIRECTORATE UNDER SUPERVISION OF PRIME  
MINISTER. IN ADDITION, NATIONAL COMMITTEE COMPOSED OF SENIOR  
CABINET, PALACE AND SECURITY OFFICIALS EHICH FORMERLY DEALT WITH  
OCCUPIED WEST BANK IN TERMS OF MAJOR POLICY DECISIONS WAS NOT  
BEING DISBANDED AND WOULD PRESUMABLY CONTINUE IN EXISTENCE FOR  
USE AS DESIRED.

9. BIO PROFILES OF NEW CABINET MINISTERS WILL BE SENT BY SEPTTEL.  
(NOTAL).  
PICKERING

UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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## Message Attributes

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